

APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

FOR

**Method And Apparatus
For
Managing And Administering Licensing Of Multi-Function
Offering Applications**

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Method and Apparatus For Managing And Administering Licensing Of Multi-Function Offering Applications

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

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1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to the field of electronic data/information processing. More specifically, the present invention relates to methods and apparatuses for managing and administering licensing of multi-function offering applications.

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2. Background Information

Historically, software products, whether it is operating systems, system management tools, or applications (hereinafter, simply software), are licensed on a machine by machine basis. In other words, each machine is provided with its own license. Once licensed, any number of users connected to the machine, directly or remotely, may execute one or more copies of the software on the machine. Other software are licensed on a user basis. That is, up to a maximum of N users (where N is the number of licensed users) may execute one or more copies of the software on the machine at the same time. Further, for client-server computing, the client and server software may be licensed separately. Numerous ones of such machine as well as user based licensing systems are known in the art.

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A common characteristic to many of these prior art software licensing systems is the predetermination of the licensing entity. That is, the functionality that forms the product or package to be distributed/licensed. For example, in the case of Microsoft Office, there is a standard edition and a professional edition, where the

constituting applications of the two editions are predetermined and fixed, thereafter distributed and licensed accordingly.

With the advance of telecommunication and networking technology, and the availability of public data networks, such as the Internet, the distribution and

5 licensing software are evolving. It is much easier for a licensee to download the
software titles of interest. Moreover, increasingly application software are being
offered as hosted application services remotely accessed using special or generic
clients. Couple this with the development of increased richness in the functionalities
offered by many applications or application services, such as the function rich
10 financial applications or application services available from FinancialCAD of Surrey,
Canada, assignee of the present application, a new approach to managing and
administering licensing of software is desired.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with a first aspect of the present invention, an administrator/user account creation/management (ACM) tool is provided to manage 5 and administer administrator and user account creation and management for an application. In one embodiment, the application is a client-server application, and the ACM tool facilitate management and administration of the administrator and user accounts on the server side of the application.

In one embodiment, the ACM tool is equipped to facilitate an administrator of 10 a service operator in creating a number of administrator accounts for other administrators of the service operator, and a number of administrator accounts for a number of administrators of service providers. The ACM tool is further equipped to facilitate the administrator of the service operator to delegate and empower the administrators of the service providers to administer control on user access to the 15 application by users of the licensees of the service providers. In one embodiment, the ACM tool is equipped to facilitate an empowered administrator of a service provider in creating a number of administrator accounts for other administrators of the service provider, and a number of administrator accounts for a number of administrators of licensee organizations of licensee enterprises of the service provider. Likewise, the ACM tool is further equipped to facilitate the service provider 20 to delegate and empower the administrators of the licensee organizations of the licensee enterprises to administer control on user access to the application by users of the licensee organizations.

In one embodiment, the ACM tool is equipped to facilitate an empowered 25 administrator of a licensee organization in creating a number of other administrator accounts of other administrators of the licensee organization, a number of user

groups, and a number of end user accounts for a number of end users of the licensee organization. The ACM tool is further equipped to facilitate the administrator of the licensee organization to enable the end users in accessing the application. In one embodiment, the end users are remote clients, and the

5 accesses are made remotely.

In accordance with a second aspect of the present invention, a function offering/service creation/management (FCM) tool is provided to manage and administer function offering and service creation as well as access management for an application. In one embodiment, the application is a client-server application,

10 and the FCM tool facilitates management and administration of function offering and service creation as well as access management on the server side of the application.

In one embodiment, the FCM tool is equipped to facilitate an empowered administrator of a service operator in defining a number of function offerings

15 constituted with different selective combinations of services, which themselves are constituted with selective combinations of packages of service components of the application. The FCM tool is further equipped to facilitate the empowerment of administrators of service providers to empower administrators of licensee organizations to administer control on user access to the function offerings and their

20 constituting services.

In one embodiment, the FCM tool is also equipped to facilitate an empowered administrator of a licensee organization to enable end users to access the function offerings and their constituting services. In one embodiment, the end users are remote clients, and the accesses are made remotely.

25 In one embodiment, the service components are objects having methods and properties.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

The present invention will be described by way of exemplary embodiments, but not limitations, illustrated in the accompanying drawings in which like references 5 denote similar elements, and in which:

Figure 1 illustrates an overview of the present invention, in accordance with one embodiment;

Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between the various entities of the present invention, including the account creation and administration method of the 10 present invention, in accordance with one embodiment;

Figures 3a-3b illustrate a data organization of the administrator/user account creation and management tool, in accordance with one embodiment;

Figures 3c-3d illustrate properties and methods of a component object under the present invention, in particular, the security attribute, in accordance with one 15 embodiment;

Figure 4 illustrates an end user interface of the administrator/user account creation and management tool, in accordance with one embodiment;

Figure 5 illustrates the relevant operational flow of the administrator/user account creation and management tool, in accordance with one embodiment;

20 **Figure 6** illustrates a function offering/service creation and authorizing method of the present invention, in accordance with one embodiment;

Figures 7a-7b illustrate a data organization of the function offering/service creation and management tool, in accordance with one embodiment;

25 **Figures 8a-8d** illustrate an end user interface of the function offering/service creation and management tool, in accordance with one embodiment;

Figures 9a-9d illustrate the relevant operational flows of the function offering/service creation and management tool, in accordance with one embodiment;

5 **Figure 10** illustrates an overview of the function offering/service execution method of the present invention, in accordance with one embodiment;

Figure 11 illustrates the relevant operational flow of the runtime controller of **Fig. 10**, in accordance with one embodiment;

Figure 12 illustrates a network environment suitable for practicing the present invention, in accordance with one embodiment; and

10 **Figure 13** illustrates an example computer system suitable for use as one of the administrator/user computer of **Fig. 12** to practice the present invention, in accordance with one embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

In the following description, various aspects of the present invention will be described. However, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that the present invention may be practiced with only some or all aspects of the present invention.

5 invention may be practiced with only some or all aspects of the present invention. For purposes of explanation, specific numbers, materials and configurations are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. However, it will also be apparent to one skilled in the art that the present invention may be practiced without the specific details. In other instances, well known features are

10 omitted or simplified in order not to obscure the present invention.

Parts of the description will be presented using terms such as accounts, IDs, objects, end-user interfaces, buttons, and so forth, commonly employed by those skilled in the art to convey the substance of their work to others skilled in the art.

Parts of the description will be presented in terms of operations performed by a

15 computer system, using terms such as creating, empowering, and so forth. As well understood by those skilled in the art, these quantities and operations take the form of electrical, magnetic, or optical signals capable of being stored, transferred, combined, and otherwise manipulated through mechanical and electrical components of a digital system; and the term digital system include general purpose as well as

20 special purpose data processing machines, systems, and the like, that are standalone, adjunct or embedded.

Various operations will be described as multiple discrete steps performed in turn in a manner that is most helpful in understanding the present invention, however, the order of description should not be construed as to imply that these operations are

25 necessarily order dependent, in particular, the order the steps are presented.

Furthermore, the phrase “in one embodiment” will be used repeatedly, however the phrase does not necessarily refer to the same embodiment, although it may.

Referring now to **Figure 1**, wherein an overview of the present invention in accordance with one embodiment is shown. As illustrated, in accordance with the present invention, Application or application service **100** (hereinafter, including the claims, simply application) having a number of service components **110** (or simply components) is provided with administration tools **102** and runtime controller **104** to facilitate administration and management of user access and usage of components **110**. In one embodiment, application **100** is hosted on one or more servers, and the users are remote client users accessing components **110** remotely.

For the illustrated embodiment, as will be described in more details below, components **110** are selectively packaged into packages **111**, which in turn are packaged into services **112**, and then function offerings **114** for administration and management, i.e. licensing and access/usage control. However, as will be apparent from the description to follow, the present invention may alternatively be practiced with more or less levels of organization/packaging of components **110**.

For the purpose of this application, components are programmatic software entities commonly referred to as “objects”, having methods and properties, as these terms are well known in the context of object oriented programming. Packages are groupings of interdependent components similar in functional scope. Services are logical groupings of service functionality that when combined with other services provide broader information processing support. Functional offerings are sets of services offered and licensed to licensees.

Administration tools **104** include in particular administrator/user account creation/management (ACM) tool **106** and function offering/service

creation/management (FCM) tool **108**. Briefly, ACM tool **106** is equipped to facilitate creation of various administrator and end user accounts for various administrators and end users, including facilitation of empowerment of various administrators to administer control on user access to application **100**, more specifically, functional offerings **114** and services **112**. FCM tool **106** is equipped to facilitate creation of the various function offerings **114** and services **112**, including empowering of the various administrators in administering control on user access to components **110**, through invocation of function offerings **114** and/or services **112**. These and other aspects of the present invention will be described in turn in the description to follow.

10 Before proceeding with additional description, it should be noted that application **100** is intended to represent a broad range of application known in the art, including in particular financial applications such as those offered by the assignee of the present invention. Further, while for ease of understanding, the present invention is presented in the context of application **100**, from the description 15 to follow, those skilled in the art would appreciate that the present invention may be practiced for other system/subsystem software products or services, as well as other multi-media contents, including but not limited to video, audio and graphics. Accordingly, unless specifically limited, the term “application” as used herein in this patent application, including the specification and the claims, is intended to include 20 system and subsystem software products and services, as well as multi-media contents.

Referring now to **Fig. 2**, wherein an overview of the relationship between the various entities under the present invention, including the administrator and user 25 account creation and management method of the present invention, in accordance with one embodiment, is shown. As illustrated, for the embodiment, an

administrator **202** of a service operator creates administrator accounts for administrators of service providers **204**. An empowered administrator **202** may also create administrator accounts for other administrators of the service operator.

Administrators **202** of the service operator also empower administrators **204** of the

5 service providers to further create other administrator and user accounts, and administer control on user access to components **110** of application **100** (through access to functional offerings **114** or services **112**).

For the purpose of this application, a service operator is an organization that provides hardware, software and data management services, whereas a service

10 provider is an organization that offers functional offerings or services of the application, utilizing the services of the service operator. Of course, in various embodiments, a service operator may also act in the role of a service provider.

Continuing to refer to **Fig. 2**, an empowered administrator **204** of a service provider in turn would create administrator accounts for administrators **206** of

15 service subscription licensee organizations of the service provider. Similarly, an empowered administrator **204** may also create other administrator accounts other administrators of the service provider. An empowered administrator **204** of a service provider also empowers administrators **206** of the licensee organization to create user groups **208** and user accounts for users **210** of the respective licensee organizations, and administer control on user access to components **110** of application **100** (through access to functional offerings **114** or services **112**) within the respective licensee organizations.

For the illustrated embodiments, licensee organizations are constituting organization units of service subscription licensee enterprises. Each licensee

25 enterprise **205** may have one or more licensee organizations. The organization unit may be a wholly owned subsidiary, a division, a group, or a department. In other

words, it may be any one of a number of internal business entities. Moreover, an empowered administrator **206** of a licensee organization may also create one or more user groups **208**, and associates users **210** as members **209** of user groups **208**. Similarly, in alternate embodiments, the present invention may also be practiced without the employment of user groups or with more levels of user organizations.

Note that an administrator is also a “user”, only a special “user”, having assumed the role or responsibility of administration. Similarly a service operator or a service provider is also an “enterprise”, only a special “enterprise”, having assumed the role or responsibilities described above for a service operator and a service provider respectively. Moreover, each service operator, as well as each service provider, may have its own “organization” administrators, user groups and users. However, for ease of understanding, the present invention will be described using these terms delineating the roles assumed by the different enterprises/users.

Further, the present invention will only be described in terms of a service operator delegating and empowering a service provider, and an empowered service provider in turn delegating and empowering administrators of a service subscribing licensee organization, and so forth. Those skilled in the art would appreciate that the description applies equally to the service operator/provider’s own organization administrator, user groups and end users.

In one embodiment, an empowered administrator **202** of a service operator is also able to create the administrator accounts and the end user accounts of a licensee organization directly, skipping one or more of the administrators **204** of the service providers and the administrators **206** of the licensee organization. Similarly, an empowered administrator **204** of a service provider is also able to create user groups and end user accounts of a licensee organization directly, skipping

administrators **206** of a licensee organization. In other words, for the illustrated embodiment, an administrator **202** of a service operator may perform all administration and management tasks an administrator **204** of a service provider of its creation as well as an administrator **206** of a licensee of the service provider may 5 perform. An administrator **204** of a service provider may perform all administration and management tasks an administrator **206** of a licensee administrator of its creation may perform.

Thus, it can be seen from the above description, under the present invention, the administration and management of licensing, i.e. control of user access to an 10 application, is advantageously hierarchical and decentralized, with the administration responsibilities distributed/delegated to administrators at various levels of the administration hierarchy. Experience has shown, the hierarchical decentralized or distributed approach is much more flexible, and particular suitable for administering and managing licensing of applications with complex multi- 15 functions, to a large customer base with a large number of end users, across large wide area networks.

Still referring to **Fig. 2**, as illustrated, administrators **206** of each licensee organization may also create data publications **212** to facilitate data sharing. Administrators **206** first minimally define a number of data publications, e.g. their 20 topics. Administrators **206** designate selected ones of its users **210** as eligible shared data contributors **213**, and selected ones of the authorized service components of data contributors **213** as publishing components **214**. Thereafter, contributors **213** selectively tags data managed by their authorized ones of publishing components **204** for inclusion with data publications **212** as desired. For 25 the illustrated embodiment, data publications **212** are available for subscription across licensee organization boundaries. Administrators **206** further define which if

any of extra-organizational data publications **212** are available for subscriptions by “eligible” users **210** of the licensee organization. Administrators **206** designate these “eligible” users **210** as publication subscribers **211**. Subscribers **211** can then on their own subscribe to available data publications **212**. Of course, a user may be 5 designated as a contributor **213** as well as a subscriber **211** for the same or different data publications **212**.

As will be apparent from the description to follow, the contributor, subscriber and data publication architecture of the present invention provides an efficient and flexible, yet controlled, approach to data sharing within and across organizations.

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Figures 3a-3b illustrate a data organization associated with ACM **106** for the practice of the present invention, in accordance with one embodiment. As illustrated, data organization **300** includes tables or views **302a-302i** (hereinafter, simple table or tables). Table **302a** is used to store an identifier **304** and basic 15 attribute information **306** for each administrator account of a service operator created. Identifier **304** may be formed in any manner employing any convention. Likewise, attribute information **306** may include any typical account associated information, such as the administrator's name, employee number, department 20 number, phone number and so forth. The exact composition of these attributes is not essential to the present invention, accordingly will not be further described.

Table **302b** is used to store administrator account identifiers **308** for service provider administrator accounts created by the various service operator administrators denoted by administrator identifiers **304**.

Table **302c** is used to store an identifier **308** and basic attribute information 25 **310** for each administrator account of a service provider created. Similarly, identifier **308** may be formed in any manner employing any convention, and attribute

information **310** may include any typical account associated information. Table **302d** is used to store administrator account identifiers **312** for administrator accounts of licensee organization created by the various service operator administrators denoted by administrator identifiers **308**.

5 Table **302e** is used to store an identifier **312** and basic attribute information **314** for each administrator account of a licensee organization created. Likewise identifier **312** may be formed in any manner employing any convention, and attribute information **314** may also include any typical account associated information, such as the organization administrator's name, customer number, department number, 10 phone number and so forth. The exact composition of these attributes is also not essential to the present invention, accordingly will not be further described either. Tables **302f** and **302h** are used to store user group identifiers **316** and end user identifiers **320** created by the various administrators of the licensee organization denoted by organization administrator identifiers **312**. Tables **302g** and **302i** are 15 used to store an identifier **316** and basic attribute information **318** for each user group created, and an identifier **320** and basic attribute information **322** for each end user account created respectively. Likewise identifiers **316** and **320** may be formed in any manner employing any convention, and attribute information **318** and **322** may also include any typical account associated information, such as the user 20 group/end user's name, customer number, department number, phone number and so forth. The exact composition of these attributes is also not essential to the present invention, accordingly will not be further described either.

As it can be seen from the description, data organization **300** enables the various types of accounts created, administrator accounts of the service operator 25 and the service providers, administrator accounts of the licensee organizations, user groups, and end user accounts, to be easily ascertained.

In alternate embodiments, other equivalent data organizations include but not limited to flat files, hierarchical databases, linked lists, and so forth, may also be employed instead to practice the present invention.

5 **Figures 3c-3d** illustrate in further detail the properties of a component **110**, its methods, including in particular, the security property associated with each component **110**. As illustrated, for the embodiment, each component **110** includes a unique identifier **332** identifying the component, and a type property **334** to identify the object type of the component. Further, each component **110** includes properties
10 **338** and **336** describing the parent object's identifier and the object type of the parent object respectively. Additionally, each component **110** includes property **340** identifying the user owner, property **342** identifying the access rights the user owner has granted to others, and if applicable, property **344** identifying the data publication with which the component is associated with. As illustrated, component **110** may
15 also include other properties **346**.

As alluded to earlier, each component **110** has a number of methods. For the illustrated embodiment, the methods **350** include at least a Get method **352** for retrieving data associated with the component and other applicable subscribed publishing components, a Put method **354** to store a copy of data present in the
20 component into memory or mass storage, and an Execute method **356** to perform a pre-determined computation using the data of the component and other applicable subscribed publishing components. Of course, each component **110** may also include other methods.

As illustrated in **Fig. 3d**, each user owner specifies for himself/herself and
25 other data sharing entities the rights to use these methods, i.e. the Get Method, the Put Method, and the Execute Method. If a data sharing entity is authorized to use

the method, all members of the data sharing entity are authorized. In other words, authorization of the members are implicitly given. If authorized, the corresponding “cell” of “table” 360 is set to “true”, otherwise it is set to “false”, denoting the members of the data sharing entity are not authorized to use the method. For

5 example, if a user authorizes himself/herself to use all three methods, then all three “cells” in “column” 1 of “table” 360 are set to “true” or “1”. As a further example, if other members of a group to which the user belongs to is authorized to use the Get method, then the “cell” in “column” 2, “row” 1 of “table” 360 is set to “true” or “1”, and the remaining “cells” in “column” 2, i.e. “rows” 2-3 of “table” 360 are set to “false”.

10 10 The “cells” of the remaining Org, Enterprise and World columns are set accordingly. [Note that “table” 360 is employed for illustrative purpose only. The authorization data may be stored in any one of a number of known data structures.]

For the illustrated embodiment, for efficiency of storage and efficiency of processing, each digital representation of “1”s and “0”s of a combination of

15 15 authorized usage of these methods for the various entities is “reduced” to a numeric value and stored in security field 342 for use during operation to control access to the data managed by the components.

20 20 In one embodiment, the reduction is performed by a secure runtime service that supports the user owner in making the authorization. Further, the reduction of the digital representation to a numeric value is made in accordance to the following approach:

25 25 a) a digital representation is determined for the authorization given to an entity (such as the user, its user group, and so forth), e.g. if the user group is authorized to Get and Execute, but not Put, the digital representation would be “101”;

b) the digital representation would be mapped to a decimal value, e.g. "001" would be 1, and "111" would be 7;

c) the decimal representations are then concatenated together to form the aggregated numeric representation of the authorization granted, and stored as the security property, e.g. if the decimal representations of the authorization granted to user, group, organization, enterprise and world are 7, 5, 3, 2, 0 respectively, the security property is 75320.

Figure 4 illustrates an end user interface of ACM 106 suitable for use to practice the present invention, in accordance with one embodiment. For the illustrated embodiment, it is assumed that the account creating/updating administrator has successfully logged into the system (e.g. from a remote administration "console"). That is, the administrator has been properly validated as either the administrator of a service operator, one of the service provider administrators, or one of the organization administrators. Such validation may be made in any one of a number of techniques known in the art. Further, the embodiment allows any of the different accounts to be created/updated. However, as those skilled in the art will appreciate that the present invention may also be practiced with individual end user interfaces, one each of the different account types, or selective combination thereof.

For the embodiment, interface 400 includes a display 402 of the logged-in administrator's identifier. Further, it includes various check boxes 404 for the administrator to denote the account type of the account to be created. For the illustrated embodiment, selection of the account type of the account to be created also implicitly empowers the account to be created. That is, denoting the account to be created is of the service provider administrator type, implicitly empowers the

account holder to be able to create and maintain organization administrator accounts, user groups as well as end user accounts. Likewise, denoting the account to be created is of the organization administrator type, implicitly empowers the account holder to be able to create and maintain user groups as well as end user accounts.

5 user accounts.

Fields **410** facilitates identification of the parent administrator for the administrator/user account being created. For example, a service provider administrator identifier is to be provided for an organization administrator account to be created, and an organization administrator identifier is to be provided for a user group or an end user account to be created. Fields **412** facilitate information entry for the various attributes of the administrator/user account to be created/updated. For the illustrated embodiment, fields **412** facilitate in particular the specification of whether the user may be designated as a contributor to contribute to data managed by a publishing component of a data publication, and whether the user may act in the role of a subscriber, subscribing to available data publications, as described earlier.

10 Interface **400** also includes a field **404** for reflecting the administrator/user account identifier for the account being created, or for entry of an administrator or end user identifier to retrieve the account record of the administrator/end user for update/maintenance. A “search” button **406** is also provided for the logged-in administrator to list and select the various administrator/user account records that are within the administrative scope of the logged-in administrator for update and maintenance. Button **414** submits the administrator/user account for creation or update.

In alternate embodiments, other interface features or interfaces, such as interfaces individualized for the various account types as alluded to earlier, may be used instead to practice the present invention.

5 **Figure 5** illustrates the relevant operational flows of ACM 106 for practicing the present invention, in accordance with one embodiment. As illustrated, upon receipt of an event notification associated with the end user interface (hereinafter, simply “request”), ACM 106 determines if the requested operation is authorized or not, block 504, that is whether the logged-in administrator is empowered to perform 10 the requested operation. If not, the requested operation is rejected, block 506, preferably with appropriate rejection notification messages. An example of such unauthorized operation is the request by a logged-in group administrator to create an organization administrator account.

15 If the requested operation is authorized, ACM 106 determines whether it is an individual record retrieval request or a “list” request, blocks 508-510. ACM 106 then either retrieves the requested individual record (using the administrator/user identifier entered), block 512, or returns a list of administrator/user identifiers that are within the administration scope of the logged-in administrator, block 514. If it is determined at block 508 that the requested operation is not a retrieval request, the 20 requested operation is either an update or create request. ACM 106 proceeds to verify whether all required fields have been properly entered, and whether all entered fields have been entered correctly with the appropriate type of information. The precise nature of error checking is application dependent, and not essential to the practice of the present invention. If one or more errors are detected, correction 25 is requested of the user. Eventually, upon determining that all fields are correct,

ACM 106 creates or updates the administrator/user account record as requested, block 520.

Thus, the first aspect of the present invention, i.e. hierarchically and distributively administer and manage the creation of administrator and user accounts, and empowering the administrators to administer control on user access to application 100 has been described.

Figure 6 illustrates the function offering/service creation and access control method of the present invention, in accordance with one embodiment. As illustrated, for the embodiment, a service operator administrator defines and creates various function offerings and services, enumerating their constituting services and service components respectively, and selectively empowers the various service provider administrators to administer control on user access to various ones of the function offerings and/or services, block **602**. In turn, for the illustrated embodiment, an empowered service provider administrator selectively empowers the various organization administrators to administer control on user access to various ones of the function offerings and/or services, block **604**. Then, an empowered organization administrator selectively enables members of the user groups and various end users to access various ones of the function offerings and/or services, block **606**. For the illustrated embodiment, the selective enablement includes selective designation of users as contributors, authorized service components as publishing components, and definition of data publications, as well as designation of available data publications, and users as subscribers, eligible to subscribe to available data publications on their own.

25 Thus, it can be seen from the above description, functionalities of application
100 may be easily and flexibly defined into different function offerings and/or

services for distribution and licensing to different customers, and even different organization units of a customer. Controlling access to these different function offerings and/or services may be readily effectuated through the decentralized administrators. Moreover, data may be published and shared efficiently and flexibly,
5 yet controlled, within and across organizations.

Figures 7a-7b illustrate a data organization associated with FCM **108** for practicing the present invention, in accordance with one embodiment. As illustrated, for the embodiment, data organization **700** includes tables/views (hereinafter simply 10 tables) **730a-730g**. Table **730a** is used to store an identifier **702** and basic attribute information **704** for each function offering created. Identifier **702** may be formed in any manner, employing any convention. Attribute information **704** includes in particular pointers to the constituting services. Beyond that, attribute information **704** may include any typical offering description associated information, such as the 15 offering's name, date of creation, date of last modification, and so forth. The exact composition of these other attributes is not essential to the present invention, accordingly will not be further described. Table **730b** is used to store an identifier **706** and basic attribute information **708** for each constituting service created. Similarly, identifier **706** may be formed in any manner, employing any convention. 20 Likewise, attribute information **708** includes in particular pointers to the constituting packages. Beyond that, attribute information **708** may include any typical service description associated information, such as the service's name, date of creation, date of last modification, and so forth. The exact composition of these other attributes is also not essential to the present invention, accordingly will not be further 25 described either.

In like manner, table **730c** is used to store an identifier **710** and basic attribute information **712** for each constituting package. Similarly, identifier **710** may be formed in any manner, employing any convention. Attribute information **712** may include any typical package description associated information, such as the package's name, date of creation, date of last modification, and so forth. The exact composition of these other attributes is also not essential to the present invention, accordingly will not be further described either. Table **720d** is used to store an identifier **714** and basic attribute information **716** for each constituting service component. Similarly, identifier **714** may be formed in any manner, employing any convention. Attribute information **716** may include any typical service component description associated information, such as the service component' name, date of creation, date of last modification, and so forth, as well as those properties enumerated earlier referencing **Fig. 3d**. In the present context, the term "attributes" and "properties" may be considered as synonymous. The exact composition of these other attributes/properties, except for the enumerated ones, is also not essential to the present invention, accordingly will not be further described either.

Table **730e** is used to store the identifiers **702a** and **706a** of the various function offerings and services, the various organization administrators (denoted by identifiers **718**) are empowered (i.e. authorized) to administer control on their accesses. Tables **730f-730g** are used to store the identifiers **702b702c** and **706b-706c** of the various function offerings and services, the various end users (denoted by identifiers **720-722**) are enabled to access.

In alternate embodiments, these data may be organized differently. Further, different data structures may be employed to store the data.

Figures 8a-8d illustrate four panes of an end user interface of FOM 108 suitable for use to practice the present invention, in accordance with one embodiment. As illustrated, for the embodiment, panes **802** is used to facilitate creation or update of a function offering, while pane **822** is used to facilitate creation or update of a service. Pane **842** on the other hand is used to authorize administration or access to function offerings, while pane **862** is used to authorize administration or access to services. For the embodiment, it is assumed that the function offering/service creating licensee administrator, and the function offering/service administration authorizing or access enabling administrator have successfully logged into the system (that is having been properly validated as an appropriate licensee administrator, organization administrator, or group administrator). Of course, in alternate embodiments, all the operations performed via the illustrative end user interface may be accomplished programmatically or via other approaches without the employment of an end user interface.

15 Pane **802** includes field **804** to reflect the identifier of the logged-in licensee administrator. Pane **802** further includes fields **806** and **808** and “add” and “del” buttons **814a** and **816a** for facilitating creation of a new function offering or selection of an existing function offering (the logged-in licensee administrator is authorized to manage) for update or delete. As the logged-in licensee administrator enters the name of a function offering in field **806**, existing function offerings that match the portion of the name entered thus far are retrieved and displayed in field **808** (which becomes a scrollable list if the number of retrieved function offerings exceeds the amount of space available for display in field **808**). If no function offering matches the name entered, field **808** remains empty. The logged-in licensee administrator 20 may “click” on “add” button **814a** to have a function offering of the name entered created (its contents remain to be defined). On the other hand, if function offerings 25

matching the name segment entered exist, as alluded to earlier, the names/identifiers of the matching function offerings are displayed in field **808**. The logged-in licensee administrator may then select one of the displayed function offering for update or delete. Upon selection, e.g. by “clicking” on a displayed function offering, the name/identifier of the selected function offering is echoed in field **806**. The licensee administrator may delete the selected function offering by “clicking” on “del” button **816a**.

Pane **802** further includes scrollable fields **810** and **812** and “add” and “del” buttons **814b** and **816b** for facilitating association or update of services associated with the selected function offering. Scrollable field **812** lists all services available to the licensee administrator to associate with a function offering (i.e. all authorized services with the scope of the administrator’), while scrollable field **810** lists all services associated with the selected function offering. By selecting any of the listed available or associated services, and “clicking” on “sel” (select) and “rem” (remove) buttons **814b** and **816b**, the licensee administrator may associate an available service with the selected function offering, or remove an associated service from the selected function offering. Lastly, pane **802** includes button **818** for the logged-in licensee administrator to switch to pane **822** to create a new service or update an existing service.

20 As illustrated, pane **822** includes field **824** to reflect the identifier of the
logged-in licensee administrator. Pane **822** further includes fields **826** and **828** and
“add” and “del” buttons **834a** and **836a** for facilitating creation of a new service or
selection of an existing service (the logged-in licensee administrator is authorized to
manage) for update or delete. As the logged-in licensee administrator enters the
25 name of a service in field **826**, existing services that match the portion of the name
entered thus far are retrieved and displayed in field **828** (which becomes a scrollable

list if the number of retrieved services exceeds the amount of space available for display in field **828**). If no service matches the name entered, field **828** remains empty. The logged-in licensee administrator may “click” on “add” button **834a** to have a service of the name entered created (its contents remain to be defined). On

5 the other hand, if services matching the name segment entered exist, as alluded to earlier, the names/identifiers of the matching services are displayed in field **808**.

The logged-in licensee administrator may then select one of the displayed services for update or delete. Upon selection, e.g. by “clicking” on a displayed service, the name/identifier of the selected service is echoed in field **826**. The licensee

10 administrator may delete the selected service by “clicking” on “del” button **836a**.

Pane **822** further includes scrollable fields **830** and **832** and “add” and “del” buttons **834b** and **836b** for facilitating association or update of service components associated with the selected service. Scrollable field **832** lists all service components available to the licensee administrator to associate with a service (i.e.

15 all authorized service components), while scrollable field **830** lists all service components associated with the selected service. By selecting any of the listed available or associated services, and “clicking” on “sel” (select) and “rem” (remove) buttons **814b** and **816b**, the licensee administrator may associate an available service component with the selected service, or remove an associated service

20 component from the selected service.

In one embodiment, pane **822** also includes like features (not specifically shown) to facilitate an administrator of a licensee organization in creating or updating data publications, designating selected ones of the licensed service components as publishing components of the data publications.

25 Similar to pane **802**, pane **822** also includes button **838** for the logged-in licensee administrator to switch to pane **802** to create a new function offering or

update an existing function offering. Accordingly, using buttons **818** and **838**, a licensee administrator may switch back and forth between panes **802** and **822**, creating and updating function offerings as well as services, in particular, the function offerings' constituting services.

5 Pane **842** includes field **844** to reflect the identifier of the logged-in licensee, organization or group administrator. Pane **842** further includes field **846** and “browse” button **826** for facilitating selection of an organization, group or user identifier, within the scope of the logged-in administrator’s authority for function offering/service administration. The logged-in administrator may directly enter the
10 organization/group/user identifier to be administered into field **846**, or “click” on “browse” button **856a** to list organization and group administrators as well as end users within the logged-in administrator’s administration scope, and select an administration subject from the list. Pane **842** further includes scrollable fields **850** and **852**, as well as “sel” (select) and “del” (delete) buttons **858a** and **858b** for
15 authorizing function offerings within the administration scope of the logged-in administrator to the administration subject, or removing authorized function offerings of the administration subject. Scrollable field **850** lists all available function offerings, while scrollable field **852** lists all authorized function offerings. Button **858a** authorizes a selected available function offering, while button **858b** removes a
20 selected authorized function offering. For the illustrated embodiment, authorization of a function offering automatically authorizes all constituting services of the authorized function offering, unless specific actions are taken to revoke the authorization given for some of the constituting services. Lastly, pane **842** includes button **856b** for facilitating the logged-in administrator to switch on pane **862** to
25 authorize access at the service level instead (as opposed to the described function offering level).

In one embodiment, pane **862** also includes like features (not specifically shown) to facilitate an administrator of a licensee organization in selecting and authorizing data publications of the licensee organization and data publications of other organizations for subscription by users authorized as shared data subscribers.

5 Similar to pane **842**, pane **862** includes fields **864** and **866** to reflect the identifier of the logged-in administrator and the identifier of the administration subject. Pane **862** further includes field **868** and “browse” button **874a** for facilitating selection of a function offering, within the scope of the logged-in administrator’s authority for service level administration. The logged-in administrator may directly 10 enter the function offering identifier into field **868**, or “click” on “browse” button **874a** to list the function offerings within the logged-in administrator’s administration scope, and select a function offering from the list. Pane **862** further includes scrollable fields **872** and **870**, as well as “del” (delete) and “sel” (select) buttons **876b** and **876a** for removing authorized services of the selected function offering, and re- 15 authorizing services of the selected function offering. Scrollable field **872** lists all authorized services of the function offering, while scrollable field **870** lists all services of the function offering available for authorization. Button **876b** removes a selected authorized service of the function offering, while button **876a** re-authorizes a selected available service of the function offering. Lastly, pane **862** includes button 20 **874b** for facilitating the logged-in administrator to go to pane **842** to authorize access at the function offering level. Accordingly, using buttons **856b** and **874b**, an administrator may switch back and forth between panes **842** and **862**, authorizing and de-authorizing function offerings as well as services for selected administration subjects.

25 In alternate embodiments, other interface features as well as interfaces of other designs may be used instead to practice the present invention.

Figures 9a-9d illustrate the relevant operational flow of FOM 108 for practicing the present invention, in accordance with one embodiment. More specifically, **Fig. 9a** illustrates the relevant operational flow for creating/updating a function offering, whereas **Fig. 9b** illustrates the relevant operational flow for creating/updating a service of a function offering. **Fig. 9c** illustrates the relevant operational flow for authorizing administration or enabling access to function offerings, whereas **Fig. 9d** illustrates the relevant operational flow for authorizing administration or enabling access to services of a function offering.

10 As illustrated in **Fig. 9a**, for the embodiment, upon receipt of an event notification associated with the function offering creation/update interface (hereinafter, simply “request”), block **902**, FOM 108 determines if the request is associated with a function offering identifier being entered, block **904**. If so, FOM 108 retrieves and displays the matching function offerings, block **906**. If not, FOM 15 108 continues at block **908**.

At block **908**, FOM 108 determines if the request is associated with the selection of a displayed function offering. If so, FOM 108 retrieves the associated services of the selected function offering as well as the services within the scope of the administrator’s administration available for association with the selected function offering, block **910**. If not, FOM 108 continues at block **912**.

20 At block **912**, FOM 108 determines if the request is associated with the addition or deletion of a function offering. If so, FOM 108 creates the newly named function offering or deletes the selected function offering accordingly, block **914**. If not, FOM 108 continues at block **916**.

25 At block **916**, FOM 108 determines if the request is associated with the selection of a service to be associated with the selected function offering or the

removal of an associated service from the selected function offering. If so, FOM 108 associates or disassociates the selected service with the selected function offering accordingly, block 918. If not, for the illustrated embodiment, the request is inferred to be a request to switch to the create/update service pane. Accordingly, FOM 108 5 switches the create/update service pane and transfers control to its associated logic, block 920.

Similarly, as illustrated in **Fig. 9b**, for the embodiment, upon receipt of an event notification associated with the service creation/update interface (hereinafter, simply “request”), block 922, FOM 108 determines if the request is associated with a 10 service identifier being entered, block 924. If so, FOM 108 retrieves and displays the matching services, block 926. If not, FOM 108 continues at block 928.

At block 928, FOM 108 determines if the request is associated with the selection of a displayed service. If so, FOM 108 retrieves the associated service components of the selected service as well as the service components within the 15 scope of the administrator’s administration available for association with the selected service, block 930. If not, FOM 108 continues at block 932.

At block 932, FOM 108 determines if the request is associated with the addition of deletion of a service. If so, FOM 108 creates the newly named service or deletes the selected service accordingly, block 934. If not, FOM 108 continues at 20 block 936.

At block 936, FOM 108 determines if the request is associated with the selection of a service component to be associated with the selected service or the removal of an associated service component from the selected service. If so, FOM 108 associates or disassociates the selected service component with the selected 25 service accordingly, block 938. If not, for the illustrated embodiment, the request is inferred to be a request to switch to the create/update function offering pane.

Accordingly, FOM **108** switches the create/update function offering pane and transfers control to its associated logic, block **940**.

In one embodiment where creation of data publications for data sharing is supported, instead of inferring a request as a request to switch to the create/update function offering pane, upon determining that the request is not associated with the association/disassociation of the selected service component with the selected service, FOM **108** determines if the request is associated with the creation of a data publication instead. If so, FOM **108** facilitates the creation of the data publication, including assignment of a publication identifier. If not, FOM **108** then infers the request as being associated with switching to the create/update function offering pane, and handles the request accordingly, as described earlier.

As illustrated in **Fig. 9c**, for the embodiment, upon receipt of an event notification associated with the function offering authorization/enabling interface (hereinafter, simply “request”), block **942**, FOM **108** determines if the request is associated with an organization, group or user identifier being entered, block **944**. If so, FOM **108** retrieves function offerings already authorized for the organization/group administrator or user, and function offerings within the scope of the administrator’s administration available for authorization , block **946**. If not, FOM **108** continues at block **948**.

At block **948**, FOM **108** determines if the request is associated with listing organization/group administrator and user identifiers within the scope of the administrator’s administration. If so, FOM **108** retrieves and displays their identifiers, block **950**. If not, FOM **108** continues at block **952**.

At block **952**, FOM **108** determines if the request is associated with the selection of an organization/group administrator or user identifier. If so, FOM **108**

“simulates” entry of the selected identifier, block **954**. If not, FOM **108** continues at block **956**.

At block **956**, FOM **108** determines if the request is associated with the selection of a function offering for authorization or selection of an authorized 5 function offering for de-authorization. If so, FOM **108** authorizes or de-authorizes the selected function offering accordingly, block **958**. If not, for the illustrated embodiment, the request is inferred to be a request to switch to service authorization. Accordingly, FOM **108** switches to the service authorization pane, and transfers control to its associated logic accordingly, block **960**.

10 As illustrated in **Fig. 9d**, for the embodiment, upon receipt of an event notification associated with the service authorization/enabling interface (hereinafter, simply “request”), block **962**, FOM **108** determines if the request is associated with a function offering identifier being entered, block **944**. If so, FOM **108** retrieves services of the function offering already authorized for the organization/group 15 administrator or user, and other services of the function offering within the scope of the administrator’s administration available for authorization, block **966**. If not, FOM **108** continues at block **968**.

At block **968**, FOM **108** determines if the request is associated with listing the function offerings within the scope of the administrator’s administration. If so, FOM 20 **108** retrieves and displays their identifiers, block **970**. If not, FOM **108** continues at block **972**.

At block **972**, FOM **108** determines if the request is associated with the selection of a function offering. If so, FOM **108** “simulates” entry of the selected function offering’s identifier, block **974**. If not, FOM **108** continues at block **976**.

25 At block **976**, FOM **108** determines if the request is associated with the selection of a service for authorization or selection of an authorized service for de-

authorization. If so, **FOM 108** authorizes or de-authorizes the selected service of the function offering accordingly, block **958**. If not, for the illustrated embodiment, the request is inferred to be a request to switch to function offering authorization.

Accordingly, **FOM 108** switches to the function offering authorization pane, and

5 transfers control to its associated logic accordingly, block **960**.

In one embodiment where subscription of data publications for data sharing is supported, instead of inferring a request as a request to switch to the function offering authorization pane, upon determining that the request is not associated with the authorization/de-authorization of the selected service of the function offering,

10 **FOM 108** determines if the request is associated with the authorization of a data publication instead. If so, **FOM 108** facilitates the authorization of the data publication for subscription. If not, **FOM 108** then infers the request as being associated with switching to the function offering authorization pane, and handles the request accordingly, as described earlier.

15

Figures 10 and 11 illustrate an overview of a function offering or service launching method of the present invention, in accordance with one embodiment. As illustrated, user **1002** submits a function request (Fn_Req) to runtime controller **1004** (same as runtime controller **104** of **Fig. 1**) (block **1102**). In response, runtime

20 controller **1004** determines if this is the first request from user **1002**, i.e. whether a session environment has previously been created for requesting user **1002** (block **1104**). If the request is the first request and the session environment is yet to be created, runtime controller **1004** accesses users and function offerings/services authorization database **1008** to verify user **1002** is “enabled”, i.e. authorized to access at least one service or function offering (blocks **1106** and **1108**). In one embodiment, if user is “enabled”, runtime controller **1004** also accesses users and

function offerings/services authorization database **1008** to determine if the user is an eligible shared data subscriber, and if so, his/her subscriptions, if any. Users and function offerings/services authorization database **1008** includes a data organization having user, function offering/service authorization and enabling information similar

5 to the data organization earlier described referencing **Fig. 7**, and components **110** having security properties **342** as earlier described referencing **Fig. 3c**. Further, in an embodiment where data sharing through publication and subscription as earlier described is supported, database **1008** further includes data publications and data subscriptions of the subscriber users.

10 If user **1002** is not “enabled” (authorized) to access at least one service or function offering, the request is rejected or denied (block **1110**). If user **1002** is “enabled” (authorized) to access at least one service or function offering, runtime controller **1004** establishes a session environment **1008** for the user, instantiates various runtime services **1012** for the session **1008**, retrieves a token **1010** listing all
15 the authorized function offerings and services of the user, and associates token **1010** with session **1008** (block **1112**). In an embodiment where data sharing through publication and subscription as earlier described is supported, token **1010** further includes identification of data managed by publishing components of the user’s subscribed data publications, if any. For the earlier described publication and
20 subscription approach, applicable ones of the data managed by publishing components are resolved through the publication identifier properties of the publishing components and the subscribed data publications.

Upon doing so, or earlier determining that the request is not a first request, and such a session environment had been previously established for the user,
25 runtime controller **1004** transfers the request to an appropriate runtime service to handle. Thereafter, runtime services **1012** retrieve and instantiate the appropriate

service components or objects associated with the requested service or applicable services associated with the requested function offering **1014** in accordance with whether the requested services/function offerings are among the authorized ones listed in token **1010** created for the session **1008**. Further, during execution, the

5 user is conditionally given access to use the earlier described Get, Put, and Execute method associated with the “authorized” service components, depending on whether the user has been given the right to access these methods (blocks **1114-**
1116). Recall a non-user owner is implicitly given the right to use these methods, for being a member of an authorized user group of the user owner, or a fellow user of
10 the authorized organization/enterprise of the user owner. Alternatively, the non-user owner may have been implicitly given the right to use these methods because the user owner has granted access right to an universal data sharing entity (such as “world”).

Moreover, in an embodiment where data sharing through publication and
15 subscription as earlier described is supported, the user is conditionally given access to data managed by the authorized service components as well as data managed by the publishing components of the subscribed data publications.

Contributor users contribute to data managed by the publishing components of the data publications the users are so designated, by accessing and modifying
20 these data. Contributor users are conditionally given access to these components and data in like manner as subscriber users are conditionally given access, as earlier described.

Runtime services **1012** are intended to represent a broad range of runtime services, including but are not limited to memory allocation services, program
25 loading and initialization services, certain database or data structure interfacing functions, and so forth. In alternate embodiments, security token **1010** may be

statically pre-generated and/or dynamically updated to reflect dynamic changes in publications and subscriptions.

5 **Figure 12** illustrates a network environment suitable for practicing the present invention. As illustrated, network environment **1200** includes service operator administrator computer **1202**, service provider administrator computers **1204**, server computers **1206**, organization administrator computers **1208**, and end user computers **1210**. The computers are coupled to each other through networking fabric **1214**.

10 Server computers **1206** are equipped with the earlier described multi-function application **100** including administration tool **102** and runtime controller **104**. In selected implementations, all or part of ACM **106** and FOM **108** are instantiated onto the respective computers **1202-1204** and **1208-1210** for execution. Similarly, for selected ones of function offerings **114**, services **112**, packages **111** or service components **110**, all or part of these offerings, services, packages or service components are invoked by end user computers **1212** for execution.

15

In one embodiment, service operator administrator computer **1202**, service provider administrator computers **1204** and server computer **1206** are affiliated with the vendor of application **100**, while organization administrator computers **1208**, and end user computers **1210** are affiliated with customers or service subscribers of application **100**.

20 Computers **1202-1210** are intended to represent a broad range of computers known in the art, including general purpose as well as special purpose computers of all form factors, from palm sized, laptop, desk top to rack mounted. An example computer suitable for use is illustrated in **Figure 13**. Networking fabric **1214** is intended to represent any combination of local and/or wide area networks, including

the Internet, constituted with networking equipment, such as hubs, routers, switches as the like.

As alluded to earlier, **Figure 13** illustrates an example computer system

5 suitable for use to practice the present invention. As illustrated, example computer system **1300** includes one or more processors **1302** (depending on whether computer system **1300** is used as server computer **1206** or other administrator/end user computers **1202-1204** and **1208-1210**), and system memory **1304** coupled to each other via “bus” **1312**. Coupled also to “bus” **1312** are non-volatile mass 10 storage **1306**, input/output (I/O) devices **1308** and communication interface **1314**. During operation, memory **1304** includes working copies of programming instructions implementing teachings of the present invention.

Except for the teachings of the present invention incorporated, each of these elements is intended to represent a wide range of these devices known in the art,

15 and perform its conventional functions. For example, processor **1302** may be a processor of the Pentium® family available from Intel Corporation of Santa Clara, CA, or a processor of the PowerPC® family available from IBM of Armonk, NY. Processor **1302** performs its conventional function of executing programming instructions, including those implementing the teachings of the present invention.

20 System memory **1304** may be SDRAM, DRAM and the like, from semiconductor manufacturers such as Micron Technology of Boise, Idaho. Bus **1312** may be a single bus or a multiple bus implementation. In other words, bus **1312** may include multiple buses of identical or different kinds properly bridged, such as Local Bus, VESA, ISA, EISA, PCI and the like.

25 Mass storage **1306** may be disk drives or CDROMs from manufacturers such as Seagate Technology of Santa Cruz of CA, and the like. Typically, mass storage

1306 includes the permanent copy of the applicable portions of the programming instructions implementing the various teachings of the present invention. The permanent copy may be installed in the factory, or in the field, through download or distribution medium. I/O devices **1308** may include monitors of any types from

5 manufacturers such as Viewsonic of City, State, and cursor control devices, such as a mouse, a track ball and the like, from manufacturers such as Logitech of Milpitas, CA. Communication interface **1310** may be a modem interface, an ISDN adapter, a DSL interface, an Ethernet or Token ring network interface and the like, from manufacturers such as 3COM of San Jose, CA.

10

Thus, a method and an apparatus for managing and administering licensing of multi-function offering applications have been described. While the present invention has been described in terms of the above illustrated embodiments, those skilled in the art will recognize that the invention is not limited to the embodiments described.

15 The present invention can be practiced with modification and alteration within the spirit and scope of the appended claims. The description is thus to be regarded as illustrative instead of restrictive on the present invention.